

(iii) an analysis of the procedures regarding the positioning of cameras;

(iv) an analysis of the extent to which cameras monitor locations where drugs are stored to ensure that drugs are accounted for, and an assessment of whether this is a widely used practice; and

(v) an analysis of the actions taken to preserve and protect patient privacy.

(B) Law enforcement of medical facilities of the Department, including—

(i) how exterior cameras are used;

(ii) how interior cameras are used; and

(iii) an analysis of locations, interior and exterior, in which camera use is prioritized.

(2) Recommendations of the Secretary to improve patient safety and law enforcement, including—

(A) the placement and maintenance of cameras;

(B) the storage of data from such cameras;

(C) the authority of supervisors at medical facilities of the Department to review recordings from cameras;

(D) the number of staff required to monitor live footage from cameras at each medical facility of the Department;

(E) the funding necessary to address shortfalls with respect to cameras and the specific uses for such funding;

(F) any additional actions required to preserve and protect patient privacy; and

(G) such other matters the Secretary determines appropriate.

(c) CAMERA DEFINED.—In this section, the term “camera” means any video camera used in a medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs for purposes of patient safety or law enforcement, but does not include cameras used solely by the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist in criminal investigations conducted by the Inspector General.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 1510, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1510, the Veterans' Camera Reporting Act, introduced by Representative MCKINLEY of West Virginia.

This bill, as amended by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, requires VA to submit a report to Congress analyzing the Department's use and maintenance of video cameras for the purposes of patient safety and law enforcement within all of its medical facilities.

Last Tuesday, a nursing assistant who was formerly employed at a VA hospital in West Virginia was sentenced to seven consecutive life sentences plus 20 years after she pleaded guilty to murdering seven veterans and assaulting an eighth veteran with intent to commit murder. She took insulin that she was not authorized to ad-

minister, and she injected it into veterans who did not need it, killing all eight of them.

Following the sentencing last week, the VA Office of the Inspector General issued a report identifying numerous deficiencies in patient care and failures in VA oversight at the facility where these murders occurred. Among other things, the OIG found that there were no cameras in the ward where these events occurred, nor in the medication room where the insulin was stored, and there were no locks or other mechanisms for monitoring access to medication carts where insulin was also kept.

There are no words to adequately express the horror and sorrow we feel about the heinous crimes committed against these veterans. We cannot imagine the pain the families have endured since evidence of these murders came to light nearly 3 years ago. We can only hope that last week's sentencing will help the victims' families begin to heal and to find a sense of closure.

In Congress, we have a responsibility to help ensure that VA never allows something like this to happen again. Now, as an initial step, we need to better understand how VA uses video cameras for monitoring patient safety and physical security within its medical facilities. To that end, H.R. 1510 will require VA to submit a report summarizing how cameras are used to monitor staff and patients, the units within which cameras are prioritized, and how cameras are used to monitor drug storage. The report also must include recommendations on improving the use of cameras at VA, including whether the Department needs additional resources to install cameras for patient safety and law enforcement purposes.

This bill will require VA's report to encompass all of its medical facilities nationwide. Drug diversion, assaults, harassment, suicides, and other patient safety incidents can occur at any VA medical facility, not just hospitals. VA operates more than 1,000 inpatient and outpatient facilities across the country. Congress needs a complete picture of the extent to which cameras are used across VA so that we can better assist the Department in addressing any shortfalls.

Madam Speaker, I urge all Members to join me in approving this important bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1510, as amended, the Veterans' Camera Reporting, or the VCR, Act. The VCR Act would require VA to assess how cameras are used for patient safety and law enforcement purposes in VA medical center facilities. It would also require VA to report to Congress about how camera use could be improved to make VA safer and more responsive to veterans' needs.

I was proud to introduce this bill with Congressman DAVID MCKINLEY of West Virginia and others earlier this

year. We drafted it in response to a series of incidents across the country where missing or malfunctioning cameras played a role in serious lapses. In some of those incidents, veterans' lives were lost. Those tragedies have no place in the VA healthcare system. The VCR Act will help make sure they will never happen again.

Most importantly, it will help ensure that veterans are safe seeking the care that they have earned. The VCR Act is a bipartisan bill. It is supported by the VA and the veterans service organizations, including The VFW and the Wounded Warrior Project. I am grateful for that support.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers. In closing, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 1510, which cleared the committee unanimously. I can see no reason why any Member would vote against this bill.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1510, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROSENDALE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

ESTABLISHING VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2494) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2494

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.

(a) VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Part V of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new chapter:

“CHAPTER 80—VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION

“Sec.

“8001. Organization of Administration.

“8002. Functions of Administration.

“8003. Annual report to Congress.

“§ 8001. Organization of Administration

“(a) VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.—There is in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration. The primary function of the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is the administration of the programs of the Department that provide assistance related to economic opportunity to veterans and their dependents and survivors.

“(b) UNDER SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION.—The Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is under the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, who is directly responsible to the Secretary for the operations of the Administration.

“§ 8002. Functions of Administration

“The Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is responsible for the administration of the following programs of the Department:

“(1) Vocational rehabilitation and employment programs.

“(2) Educational assistance programs.

“(3) Veterans’ housing loan and related programs.

“(4) The verification of small businesses owned and controlled by veterans pursuant to subsection (f) of section 8127 of this title, including the administration of the database of veteran-owned businesses described in such subsection.

“(5) The Transition Assistance Program under section 1144 of title 10.

“(6) Any other program of the Department that the Secretary determines appropriate.

“§ 8003. Annual report to Congress

“The Secretary shall include in the annual report to the Congress required by section 529 of this title a report on the programs administered by the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition. Each such report shall include the following with respect to each such program during the fiscal year covered by that report:

“(1) The number of claims received.

“(2) The number of claims decided.

“(3) The average processing time for a claim.

“(4) The number of successful outcomes (as determined by the Secretary).

“(5) The number of full-time equivalent employees.

“(6) The amounts expended for information technology.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The tables of chapters at the beginning of title 38, United States Code, and of part V of title 38, United States Code, are each amended by inserting after the item relating to chapter 79 the following new item:

“80. Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration 8001”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Chapter 80 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on October 1, 2022.

(c) AUTHORIZATION FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2022 for the General Operating Expenses account of the Veterans Benefits Administration \$3,207,000,000.

(d) LABOR RIGHTS.—Any labor rights, inclusion in the bargaining unit, and collective bargaining agreement that affects an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who is transferred to the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, as established under chapter 80 of title 38,

United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply in the same manner to such employee after such transfer.

SEC. 2. UNDER SECRETARY FOR VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION.

(a) UNDER SECRETARY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 306 the following new section:

“§ 306A. Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition

“(a) UNDER SECRETARY.—There is in the Department an Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, who is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition shall be appointed without regard to political affiliation or activity and solely on the basis of demonstrated ability in—

“(1) information technology; and

“(2) the administration of programs within the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration or programs of similar content and scope.

“(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition is the head of, and is directly responsible to the Secretary for the operations of, the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.

“(c) VACANCIES.—(1) Whenever a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition occurs or is anticipated, the Secretary shall establish a commission to recommend individuals to the President for appointment to the position.

“(2) A commission established under this subsection shall be composed of the following members appointed by the Secretary:

“(A) Three persons representing education and training, vocational rehabilitation, employment, real estate, mortgage finance and related industries, and survivor benefits activities affected by the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.

“(B) Two persons representing veterans served by the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.

“(C) Two persons who have experience in the management of private sector benefits programs of similar content and scope to the economic opportunity and transition programs of the Department.

“(D) The Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

“(E) The chairman of the Veterans’ Advisory Committee on Education formed under section 3692 of this title.

“(F) One person who has held the position of Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, if the Secretary determines that it is desirable for such person to be a member of the commission.

“(3) A commission established under this subsection shall recommend at least three individuals for appointment to the position of Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition. The commission shall submit all recommendations to the Secretary. The Secretary shall forward the recommendations to the President and the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives with any comments the Secretary considers appropriate. Thereafter, the President may request the commission to recommend additional individuals for appointment.

“(4) The Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs who performs personnel management and labor relations functions shall serve as the executive secretary of a commission established under this subsection.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 306 the following new item:

“306A. Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Title 38, United States Code, is further amended—

(1) in section 306(c)(2), by striking subparagraphs (A) and (E) and redesignating subparagraphs (B), (C), (D), and (F), as subparagraphs (A) through (D), respectively;

(2) in section 317(d)(2), by inserting after “Under Secretary for Benefits,” the following: “the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition.”;

(3) in section 318(d)(2), by inserting after “Under Secretary for Benefits,” the following: “the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition.”;

(4) in section 516(e)(2)(C), by striking “Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits” and inserting “Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition”;

(5) in section 541(a)(2)(B), by striking “Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits” and inserting “Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition”;

(6) in section 542(a)(2)(B)(iii), by striking “Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits” and inserting “Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition”;

(7) in section 544(a)(2)(B)(vi), by striking “Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits” and inserting “Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition”;

(8) in section 709(c)(2)(A), by inserting after “Under Secretary for Benefits,” the following: “the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition.”;

(9) in section 7701(a), by inserting after “assistance” the following: “, other than assistance related to Economic Opportunity and Transition.”; and

(10) in section 7703, by striking paragraphs (2) and (3) and redesignating paragraphs (4) and (5) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 306A of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and the amendments made by this section, shall take effect on October 1, 2022.

SEC. 3. TRANSFER OF SERVICES.

(a) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the progress toward establishing the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, as established under section 8001 of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 4, and the transition of the provision of services to veterans by such Administration.

(b) CERTIFICATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may not transfer the function of providing any services to veterans to the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, as established under section 8001 of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 4 until the Secretary submits to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives certification that—

(1) the transition of the provision of services to such Administration will not negatively affect the provision of such services to veterans;

(2) such services are ready to be transferred.

(c) **DEADLINE FOR CERTIFICATION.**—The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives the certification required by subsection (b)—

(1) no earlier than April 1, 2022; and

(2) no later than September 1, 2022.

(d) **FAILURE TO CERTIFY.**—If the Secretary fails to submit the certification required by subsection (b) by the date specified in subsection (c)(2), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report that includes—

(1) the reason why the certification was not made by such date; and

(2) the estimated date when the certification will be made.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 2494.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on H.R. 2494, introduced by Congressman WENSTRUP, and which would establish a fourth administration at the Department of Veterans Affairs focused on economic opportunity and transition.

When our servicemembers conclude their time with the armed services, they are tasked with returning to civilian life. This is the sacrifice they make for our security, and in exchange, we owe them more than a thank you and well wishes. We owe them a commitment that they will be supported in their transition to civilian life, and that they will have a VA that is responsive to their needs.

That is why we passed the first GI Bill nearly 75 years ago to the day and why we continue today to make improvements in providing our Nation's veterans with the benefits they have earned.

Unfortunately, VA has struggled to track the effectiveness of programs for education and employment, and Congress has struggled to determine the Department's resource needs in these areas.

Madam Speaker, one of the main reasons we have identified through hearings and discussion with our veterans service organizations is that the Veterans Benefits Administration is simply asked to do too much. While man-

aging compensation claims is important, the responsibility of managing transition, education, and housing benefits often takes a backseat. To put it in perspective, the Veterans Benefits Administration's structure has not significantly changed since the Veterans Administration was established in 1930.

Madam Speaker, during the last 89 years, the services needed by veterans has dramatically changed, which is why our committee has an Economic Opportunity Subcommittee. It is time for the importance of economic opportunity to be elevated at VA as well.

This bipartisan bill would create a new administration within the Department to manage educational assistance, vocational rehabilitation, and employment, education, career counseling programs, and broadly defined shared transition assistance programs. That means a dedicated Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition solely focused on fulfilling our promise to the veterans that they will get the education they want, the housing they need, and the careers they deserve.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2494, which would direct the VA to create a new fourth administration. This new administration would oversee programs that support economic opportunity for our veterans.

During my time in Congress, I have seen repeated instances of mismanagement within the programs. I believe it is time for this new administration to be created so that more focus can be placed on economic opportunities for our veterans. This new focus is even more important today as we are trying to help veterans get back on the right economic track following the COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to thank Congressman WENSTRUP for his dedication and hard work on this bill.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues. I urge them to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1530

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing this important piece of legislation, H.R. 2494, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2494.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROSENDALE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

SGT. KETCHUM RURAL VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2441) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expand the Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and to direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study to assess certain mental health care resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs available to veterans who live in rural areas.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2441

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF RURAL ACCESS NETWORK FOR GROWTH ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) **EXPANSION.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish and maintain three new centers of the RANGE Program.

(b) **LOCATIONS.**—The centers established under subsection (a) shall be located in areas determined by the Secretary based on—

(1) the need for additional mental health care for rural veterans in such areas; and

(2) interest expressed by personnel at facilities of the Department in such areas.

(c) **TIMELINE.**—The Secretary shall establish the centers under subsection (a) during fiscal year 2022.

(d) **FUNDING.**—There is authorized to be appropriated \$1,200,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2024 to carry out this section.

SEC. 3. GAO STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE FURNISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO RURAL VETERANS.

(a) **STUDY REQUIRED.**—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study to assess whether the Department of Veterans Affairs has sufficient resources to serve rural veterans who need covered mental health care. Such study shall include assessments of—

(1) whether the mental health care furnished by the Secretary (through resources including the RANGE Program, Enhanced RANGE Program, mental health residential rehabilitation treatment programs, inpatient mental health services, and PRR centers) is sufficient to meet the covered mental health care needs of rural veterans;

(2) how best to expand and to appropriately locate resources described in paragraph (1);

(3) whether to require the establishment of a PRR center at a medical facility of the Department that serves 1,000 or more veterans on the National Psychosis Registry;

(4) the demand by rural veterans for mental health resources specified in paragraph (1);

(5) the average wait time for a rural veteran for mental health resources specified in paragraph (1); and

(6) how many rural veterans died by suicide or overdose—

(A) while on a wait list for mental health resources specified in paragraph (1); and